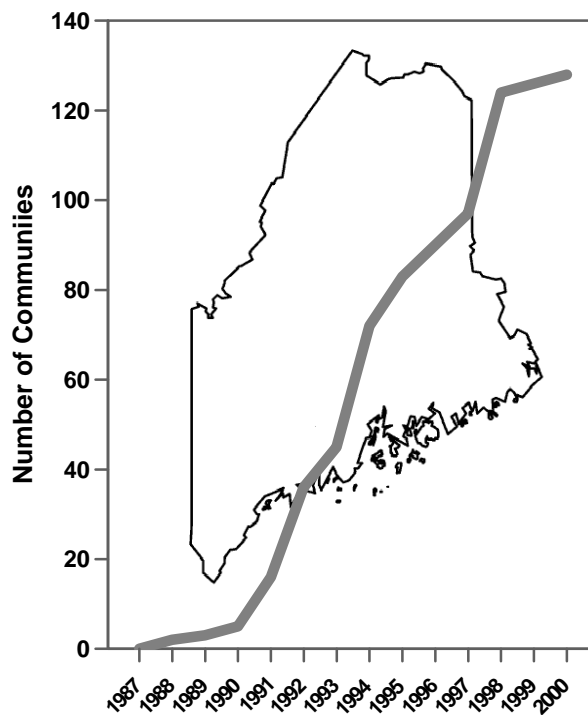


# **PAY-AS-YOU-THROW SOLID WASTE PROGRAMS IN MAINE**



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**Maine State Planning Office**  
**Waste Management and Recycling Program**

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December, 2000

## **INTRODUCTION**

The primary purpose of this report is to provide information that can be used by towns as they consider alternatives for financing their solid waste program. As solid waste costs have continued to rise through this past decade, communities have increasingly explored Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT) program options; between 1995 and 1997, 24 communities in Maine adopted a PAYT program. An additional 31 communities adopted PAYT programs between 1998 and 2000. With this system, residents buy either bags, tags, stickers, or punch cards for their trash, each typically costing between \$.30 and \$2.00. A few towns use weight-based programs where residents are charged by the pound. In almost all programs, recycling is free. As a result, people only pay for what they throw out, and are provided with incentives for reducing solid waste generation and increasing recycling.

After compiling the survey results from the State Planning Office's 1999 Annual Municipal Solid Waste Reports, we found that there are 128 Maine communities and unorganized townships with PAYT programs. In an effort to gain a better understanding of how these programs are working in Maine, the State Planning Office recently conducted a phone survey of Maine's PAYT programs. This report summarizes and analyzes the information provided by this survey. By drawing on the experiences of other towns, municipal officials will have the information they need to assist in making informed decisions.

For additional information about our program, please contact:

**State Planning Office  
Waste Management and Recycling Program  
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Augusta, Maine 04333-0038  
(207) 287-9074 or 1 (800) 662-4545**

or visit us on-line at:  
**[www.state.me.us/spo/wm&r](http://www.state.me.us/spo/wm&r)**  
**or**  
**[www.recyclemaine.com](http://www.recyclemaine.com)**

## **SURVEY RESULTS**

The survey was conducted through phone calls to the 60 towns and/or solid waste associations (totaling 128 communities), all of which reported that they have a PAYT program in place. A municipal official representing solid waste from all of the 128 communities responded to the survey. This survey examined:

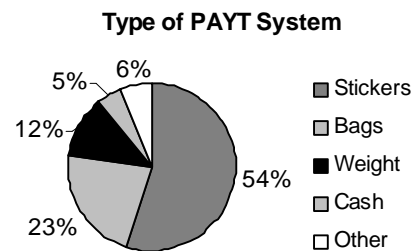
- program administration
- type of PAYT program
- distribution of bags, stickers, etc...
- solid waste budget issues
- potential problems

In the final section, a list of comments, observations, and suggestions has also been compiled. Included in these comments are individual thoughts on what impact the program has had on waste generation and recycling rates.

### **Program Administration:**

Almost all of the programs are administered by the municipality or region affected. 30 (23%) communities relied on both dropoff and curbside collection systems. 80 (63%) communities use dropoff collection systems for their trash and/or recyclables, while 18 (14%) offer curbside services for trash or both trash and recyclables.

A number of towns offer both dropoff and curbside collection. The results seem to indicate that curbside collection is not necessary for implementing a PAYT program. However, in most towns, the collection system, whether curbside or dropoff, was the same for both trash and recyclables. Only seven towns provided dropoff recycling with curbside trash collection.



### **Program Type:**

With the exception of a few towns, all of the programs surveyed use some form of bag system at a cost of between \$.30 to \$2.00 per bag of trash. This system can include providing bags, tags or stickers to residents. Twenty-seven communities, 15 of which are in Northern Katahdin Valley Region, use a weight-based system (i.e. charges per pound) -- typically, a weight-based system is more difficult to administer. Within the bag system, many towns have an upper limit on the weight allowable in each bag. In addition, 30 towns offer different size bags to meet the needs of customers who may not need, for example, a thirty gallon bag. Falmouth offers a 15 gallon bag for \$.64 and a 33 gallon bag for \$.91. Many of the programs charge residents \$1.00 for a 30 gallon bag.

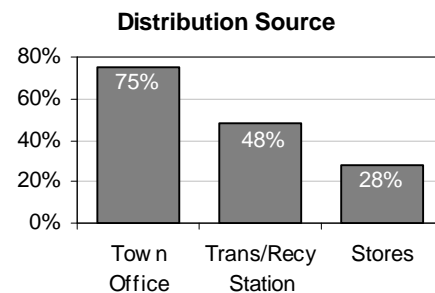
Maine has four privately run PAYT programs. In these programs, it is up to the citizens to contact the private hauler to arrange for rubbish removal. One of these programs provides stickers while the others accept cash directly.

Durham has a system that seems to work very well for its residents. Each household is provided with 26 free bags; after residents have used their first 26 bags, they are charged \$3.00 for each

bag. In this case, the primary goal of the program is to reduce generation and associated disposal fees, and increase recycling. In contrast, an important goal of other PAYT programs is to cover part of the solid waste budget with revenues from bag sales.

### **Bag distribution:**

The majority of programs distribute bags, tags or stickers through their town office and/or retail stores. Some also distribute them (or charge at the point of dropoff) through their transfer station. Using the transfer station as a bag distribution and collection system seems to work well for many of the solid waste programs with dropoff systems.

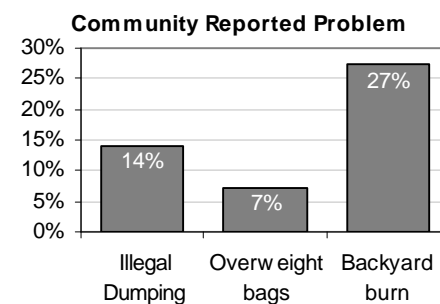


### **Solid Waste Budget Issues:**

Many of the towns did not specify which portion of their solid waste budget bag sales were intended to cover -- typically, revenues covered both collection and disposal, or were identified as being to applied to the entire solid waste budget (collection and disposal were not differentiated). A few noted that revenues were intended to specifically cover either collection or disposal. While many towns noted that revenues were designed to cover a designated portion of the entire solid waste budget (i.e. 50% or 75% of the budget). Kennebunk was one of few towns that reported PAYT fees covered 100% of the solid waste budget (excluding recycling budget).

### **Problems:**

**Illegal dumping:** Because each individual is directly paying for their trash, there is some incentive for residents to illegally dump their trash. Eighteen communities noted that they encountered some level of problems with illegal dumping. However most town officials said they had a problem with illegal dumping prior to their PAYT program. According to the Margaret Chase Smith Institute study conducted in 1995, illegal dumping is common for the first six months or so. After this, residents adjust to the system and illegal dumping lessens. It is noteworthy that 110 communities reported that there was no illegal dumping problem in their municipality. As several municipal officials noted, household garbage is too easy to identify; however, bulky waste dumping (tires, furniture, etc.) continues to be a problem. The Northern Katahdin Valley program recommends offering at least two free pickups of bulky waste annually.



**Overweight bags:** With most PAYT programs, there is a limit to how much trash can be put into one bag. However, residents may attempt to overfill the bag to save money. When asked whether there is a problem with overweight bags, only nine towns reported a problem.

**Backyard burn:** One of the major concerns from an air quality perspective is the impact of PAYT programs on the number of residents burning their trash in back yard burn barrels. While the legal use of back yard burn is limited to paper products and requires a permit (where local ordinance allow this activity), enforcement can be difficult.

Thirty-five communities (*15 are in Northern Katahdin Valley SWDD*) reported a current problem with backyard burn barrels; it was typical for towns to have experienced a short-term problem which has since disappeared. However, many towns reported that they either no longer permit backyard burn barrels or closely monitor its use.

### **Impact on recycling:**

We also asked towns about the impact of their PAYT program on local recycling rates and waste generation. In addition, towns were asked to include any advice or final thoughts they might have about their program. The responses are listed below.

- Recycling increased/waste decreased (Belfast)
- Seems to keep town cleaner (Van Buren)
- Recycling has tripled! Through the roof! (North Berwick)
- Improves participation (Mars Hill)
- Recycling up and solid waste down (Kennebunk)
- Has increased recycling some (Leeds)
- Public cares about environment through wallets (Dresden)
- Trash volume down 50%, recycling way up (Pleasant River Solid Waste Disposal District)
- More recycling/more open burning also (Charleston/Bradford/Corinth)
- Has increased recycling -- SRRA (Sandy River Recycling) also has a incentive system for increasing recycling (New Vineyard)
- Has increased because recycling is free (Troy)
- Has encouraged recycling but allowed residents to choose (Monson)
- Lowered waste tonnage/more recyclable items (Bucksport)
- Reduced household trash by 50% (Holden)
- Recycling has increased dramatically (Northern Katahdin Valley)
- Increases recycling (Durham)
- Pay-per-bag & mandatory recycling go hand in hand. (Topsham)
- Total waste volume down 60% (Calais)
- Recycling rate increased (Unity)
- Slight increase in recycling -- decrease in waste (Windsor)
- Increased recycling by 50% -- reduced waste by 35% (Falmouth)
- Increases rates (Sidney)
- It's the driving force behind our successful recycling program (Bowdoinham)
- Over all amounts of household garbage tonnage have been stable and recycling has increased (Warren)
- Increased recycling and decreased solid waste -- some residents have gone to private haulers (Searsmont)
- People watch what they put in their trash bags. (Howland)
- Pownal used to recycle at 10% or lower. Since Pay-As-You-Throw, we are recycling about 14% of the waste stream, usually placing third highest among RWS towns. (Pownal)
- (Once PAYT was in place we) started off in the low 40's (rec. rate); however, we dropped to around 38% as the sticker shock wore off. ( Tri-County Solid Waste)

### **Advice to other towns:**

- Program working well for this town. (Linneus)
- Complete success! Education and a clear goal is key. Know what you want to accomplish first. (North Berwick)
- Its the only way to go. (Mars Hill)
- Bite the bullet & go for it -- need at least one year prior education. (Pleasant River Solid Waste Disposal District)
- Be firm but flexible -- whining will go away after a 1 year. (Central Penobscot Solid Waste)
- Have at least two free pickup days for bulky garbage per year. (Northern Katahdin Valley)
- Program should be justified on grounds of fairness. (New Vineyard)
- Residents resist at first but eventually accept; should consider alternatives for elderly /low-income residents -- we waive fees on an individual basis. (Monson)
- Go for it -- don't give it a second thought -- everyone loves it. (Fryeburg)
- Do it! (Ellsworth)
- Citizens voted for it and the fees cover 100% of solid waste budget. (Kennebunk)
- Give advance warning & education -- taxpayers voted for the program. (Topsham)
- Our program has been very successful. (Calais)
- Make sure you charge enough per bag the first time around. (recently increased from \$1 to \$1.50 per bag --- Machias)
- Go for it! -- Unity has covered costs plus. (Unity)
- Do it! (Windsor)
- Decided to do it based on fairness issues. (Sidney)
- Recycling program must accept a large enough portion of the waste stream to make a PAYT program acceptable to the community. (Bowdoinham)
- Be sure you have a trustworthy attendant -- we had a problem with stickers being sold more than once. (Searsmont)
- Its not perfect but it works for us. (Warren)
- Our program has changed the minds of a lot people that did not want to recycle or use the PAYT program. We have had a very successful program. (Howland)
- Educate populace very well, over several meetings where people can come and ask questions. Emphasize the equitable cost of disposal with this program. (Pownal)
- Education/information/communication -- you can't tell people enough times. (Central Penobscot Solid Waste)
- Do not use tags. Use bags! (Tri-County Solid Waste)

## Maine Communities with Pay-As-You-Throw Programs:

Addison	Holeb*	Smyrna
Amity	Houlton	Somerville
Appleton	Howland	Sorrento
Arundel	Hudson	Starks
Attean*	Island Falls	Stockton Springs
Bald Mountain*	Islesboro	Sullivan
Beals	Jackman	T5 R6*
Belfast	Jonesboro	T5 R7*
Big Six*	Jonesport	T7 R5*
Black Gore*	Kenduskeag	T7 R18*
Blanchard TWP*	Kennebunk	T7 R19*
Bowdoinham	Knox	T8 SD*
Bradford	Leeds	T9 SD*
Bridgewater	Liberty	T10 SD*
Bucksport	Linneus	Thorndike
Calais	Litchfield	Thorndike TWP*
Castine	Long Pond*	Topsham
Centerville	Ludlow	Troy
Charleston	Machias	Union
Chatham	Mars Hill	Unity
Columbia	Marshfield	Upper Enchanted*
Columbia Falls	Mercer	Van Buren
Corinth	Merrill	Vinalhaven
Crystal	Misery TWP*	Warren
Dennistown	Monson	Washington
Dixmont	Montville	Webbertown*
Dresden	Monticello	Wellington
Dudley*	Moose River	Wells
Durham	Morrill	Whitefield
Dyer Brook	Moro Plt.	Whitneyville
E TWP*	Mount Chase	Windsor
Elliotsville TWP*	New Limerick	Winter Harbor
Ellsworth	New Vineyard	
Etna	North Berwick	
Falmouth	North Haven	
Forsyth*	Oakfield	
Frankfort	Orland	
Franklin	Palermo	
Freedom	Patten	
Fryeburg	Portland	
Garland	Pownal	
Gouldsboro	Prentice*	
Hammond	Raymond	
Hancock	Roque Bluffs	
Harmony	Sandy Bay*	
Hersey	Searsmont	
Hodgdon	Searsport	
Holden	Sidney	

Total number of PAYT programs: 128  
(Up from 52 in 1995; 65 in 1997)

\* = unorganized township